

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4001

October 17, 1991

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Since April 1987, the Kimmel brothers, Edward and Thomas, have endeavored to have the Department of Defense recommend that you initiate action to promote their father, Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, posthumously, to the rank of Admiral. He was Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack.

In 1988, after an extensive investigation, then Secretary of the Navy, William L. Ball, III, recommended to then Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, that the matter be placed before the President for decision. Secretary Carlucci declined to do so. Recently, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney decided not to send the matter to you.

The Kimmel brothers have provided extensive documentation based on scholarly research to the Department of Defense and to us in support of their position. They have also gained support of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, the Naval Academy Alumni Association, the Admiral Nimitz Foundation, two former Chiefs of Naval Operations, Arleigh Burke and Thomas Moorer, Veterans of Foreign Wars and many other World War II veterans.

It is unclear that the Department of Defense and the Navy have a reason for their position, other than that this matter "has been reviewed a number of times in the decades since Admiral Kimmel's retirement in 1942" and that "the promotional process was not the way to address the issue of Admiral Kimmel's place in history."


The Kimmel brothers are merely seeking to remove the stigma and obloquy associated with the charge by the Roberts Commission which issued its report in 1942. After a hurried investigation to find a scapegoat, the Commission charged Admiral Kimmel with being "derelict in his duty." This charge was widely publicized in 1942. It was not supported by later investigations, first in 1944 by a Naval Court of Inquiry, and again in 1946 by a Joint Congressional Investigation. Yet, the charge still sticks, and whenever the public thinks of the Pearl Harbor attack they think of the "dereliction of duty" by Admiral Kimmel.

The posthumous promotion of Admiral Kimmel will be a small step in restoring this honor. No retroactive pay should be involved. In addition, this would not be an extraordinary act. The Officer Personnel Act of 1947 permitted previously retired officers to be advanced on the retired list to the highest grade held while on active duty.

Mr. President, this year is the 50th Anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, providing an appropriate time to promote Admiral Kimmel. We believe that this matter merits your personal attention, review and careful consideration.

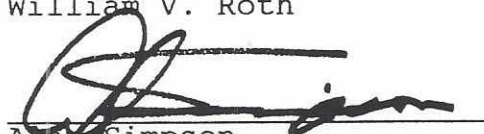
Respectfully,


Strom Thurmond


Joseph R. Biden, Jr.


John McCain


William V. Roth


Alan Simpson

cc: Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney
Secretary of the Navy H. Lawrence Garrett